

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13 HA-05 /104 W

-----060573 201223Z /43

R 201136Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2948

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL GENOA

USINT HAVANA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL NAPLES

AMCONSUL PALERMO

AMCONSUL TRIESTE POUCH

AMCONSUL TURIN POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IT, ET

SUBJECT: ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS TROUBLE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

SUMMARY: THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) VIEWS NEGATIVELY  
THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT OFFENSIVE AGAINST  
ERITREAN INSURGENTS. ITS REACTION THUS FAR ON THE ISSUE  
DEMONSTRATE THE CAUTION IT EXERCISES WHEN SOVIET INTERESTS  
ARE CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ETHIOPIAN OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE ERITREAN REBELS  
IS BEING VIEWED NEGATIVELY BY THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY  
(PCI) WHICH HAS LONG PROVIDED MATERIAL AND MORAL  
ASSISTANCE TO ERITREAN INSURGENT GROUPS. WHILE SENIOR  
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PARTY LEADERS HAVE NOT YET PRONOUNCED THEMSELVES ON THE  
ISSUE, ARTICLES MAY 17 AND 18 IN THE PCI DAILY L'UNITA  
INDICATE PRESENT PARTY THINKING ON THE ISSUE.

2. THE FIRST PUBLIC INDICATION ON THE DEPTH OF PCI  
FEELING ON THE ERITREAN ISSUE SURFACED IN THE MAY 17 ISSUE  
OF L'UNITA IN THE FORM OF A FRONT PAGE BOX HIGH-

LIGHTING AN ARTICLE APPEARING IN THE FOREIGN SECTION.  
UNDER THE TITLE QUOTE ETHIOPIAN OFFENSIVE IN ERITREA  
END QUOTE, THE CONTENTS OF THE BOX REPORT THAT QUOTE  
A DISTRUBING, MASSIVE, AND VIOLENT MILITARY OFFENSIVE  
HAS BEEN UNLEASHED BY ADDIS ABABA AGAINST THE AREA  
OF ERITREA LIBERATED BY THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS. IN THE  
ATTACK, LARGE NUMBERS OF LAND AND AIR FORCES ARE  
PARTICIPATING. SUGGESTIONS AND DENIALS OF THE PRESENCE  
OF SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY FORCES. END QUOTE. THE  
FULL STORY AMPLIFIES ON THE ABOVE SUMMARY AND QUOTES  
MENGISTU AS SAYING THAT QUOTE AMONG OUR FRIENDS,  
WE HAVE THE SOVIET UNION, CUBA, SOUTH YEMEN, EAST  
GERMANY AND OTHER COUNTRIES SINCERELY SOCIALIST AND  
PROGRESSIVE. THE TRUE, PROGRESSIVE, ABOVE-MENTIONED  
FRIENDS LIVE WITH US, DIE WITH US, AND FIGHT WITH  
US AFTER HAVING TRAVELED THOUSANDS OF KILOMETERS,  
END QUOTE. AT THE END OF THE ARTICLE IS A QUOTE  
FROM THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESSNZONE OF  
MAY 16 IN WHICH THE SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA WAS  
TERMED QUOTE HIGHLY DESTABILIZING, END QUOTE.

2. L'UNITA MAY 18 HAS A LEAD COMMENTARY ON ERITREAN  
DEVELOPMENTS AUTHORED BY ROMANO LEDDA, SECRETARY  
OF THE PCI'S NEWLY ESTABLISHED INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
INSTITUTE. NOTING THAT ERITREA IS NOT THE OGADEN AND  
THAT THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE ERITREAN INSURGENTS  
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CANNOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE MILITARY INTERVENTION OF  
SOMALIA, LEDDA TERMS THE ACTIONS OF THE INSURGENTS  
AS PART OF A JUST STRUGGLE THAT IS IN CONFORMITY WITH  
THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES THAT REGULATE THE POLITICAL ORDER  
OF THIS PHASE OF THE NATIONAL LIFE OF THE AFRICAN  
CONTINENT. LEDDA ADDS THAT QUOTE WHETHER THERE IS  
AT ADDIS ABABA HAILE SELASSIE OR A GOVERNMENT OF YOUNG  
OFFICERS OF A PROGRESSIVE INSPIRATION, IT IN NO WAY  
CHANGES THE LEGITIMACY OF THE ERITREAN CAUSE. IT  
IS THE NEW ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT THAT IN THIS QUESTION  
OUGHT TO DEMONSTRATE A DESIRE TO BE TRULY NEW. END  
QUOTE.

3. COMMENT: THE FORMULATION OF A POLICY ON THE HORN  
OF AFRICA HAS NOT BEEN EASY FOR THE PCI BECAUSE OF THE  
DIVERSITY OF ITS INTERESTS IN THE AREA. IT LONG MAIN-  
TAINED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA WHERE THE PCI ALSO  
HAS ECONOMIC INTERESTS. THE PARTY FOR IDEOLOGICAL  
REASONS FELT OBLIGED TO RECOGNIZE THE REVOLUTIONARY  
NATURE OF THE MENGISTU REGIME AND TO DEFEND IT WHEN THE

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SOMALIS PROVIDED DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO THE INSURGENTS IN THE OGADEN, JUSTIFYING AT THE SAME TIME THE RIGHT OF THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS TO GO TO THE AID OF THE MENGISTU REGIME. FINALLY, THE PCI HAS LONG GIVEN MATERIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT TO ERITREAN INSURGENTS. ALL THIS HAS LED TO BEHIND THE SCENES DEBATE AND, WE ARE TOLD, EVEN TO TENSIONS BETWEEN SENIOR PCI OFFICIALS, ON THE POLICY CHOICES WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE. A FURTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR, FOR THE PCI, IS THE CHARGES CIRCULATING, TO WHICH THE PARTY IS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE, THAT IS POLICY CHOICES REGARDING THE HORN OF AFRICA HAVE BEEN TO DATE CONDITIONED BY THE SOVIETS.

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4. THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT DOES DEMONSTRATE THAT THE

PCI IS PREPARED ON OCCASION TO TAKE A POSITION DIVERSE FROM THAT OF THE SOVIETS IN AN AREA WHERE ITS INTERESTS ARE AFFECTED, ALTHOUGH IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THE PCI HAS THUS FAR REFRAINED FROM USING ONE OF ITS SENIOR OFFICIALS, I.E., PAJETTA, WHO IS ITS CHIEF FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN, TO SET FORTH ITS POSITION. FURTHERMORE, IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE PCI, IN PUTTING DISTANCE BETWEEN ITSELF AND THE SOVIETS ON THE ERITREAN ISSUE, HAS THUS FAR TAKEN CARE NOT TO TOUCH SOVIET SENSITIVITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, LEDDA'S LENGTHY COMMENTARY IS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE ACTIONS OF THE ETHIOPIAN REGIME, BUT IT DID NOT ONCE MENTION SOVIET AND CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN BUILDING UP THE MILITARY CAPABILITIES OF THE ETHIOPIANS NOR SOVIET JUSTIFICATION FOR AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE CURRENT OFFENSIVE. IN SUM, WE FIND YET ONE MORE OCCASION ON WHICH THE PCI IS READY TO GO THE FIRST FEW YARDS IN DISTANCING ITSELF FROM THE SOVIETS BUTNMS NOT ABLE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS TO COMPLETE THE JOURNEY. GARDNER

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## Message Attributes

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